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January 26, 1970

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Highlights of Symington Subcommittee Session on
Okinawa and Japan (1), January 26, 1970

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Most of the morning session was devoted to consideration of those portions of Ambassador Johnson's prepared statement which concerned our basic treaty relationship with Japan and agreements consequent thereto, including

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the Nixon-Sato communique on Okinawa reversion and Ambassador Johnson's press backgrounder in regard to the communique. In addition to Senator Symington, Senator Fulbright was present for about an hour and Senator Gore for a brief period.

At the outset, Senator Symington made an "unprepared statement," in which he said that he was concerned about the apprehension in some circles in regard to the efforts of the Subcommittee to find out more about our overseas activities. He said that from the President on down we must all look at priorities; Senator Symington's obligation was to find out the facts and make as much information as possible available to the American people. There were those who thought that we might have a better government if Congress were not apprised of everything that was going on, but it would not be a government as established under our constitution.

Senator Symington asked about the application of the prior-consultation clause in situations such as the Pueblo and EC-121 incidents. Ambassador Johnson explained that there would be no need for prior consultation if planes already in the area for escort or search and rescue purposes engaged an attacking force, but planes could not be launched

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directly from Japan in retaliation, unless, for example, they first landed in Korea. Senator Symington asked whether it would be possible for aircraft to be launched without prior consultation within a half hour of an incident while the aggressor was still returning to his base. Ambassador Johnson said it would be difficult to anticipate every conceivable situation.

Asked by Senator Symington whether the US was opposed to Japan's developing a strategic military force, Ambassador Johnson said that, interpreting this to mean a nuclear force, we opposed it and therefore wanted Japan to sign the NPT. (The names of countries that have signed the NPT were requested for the record.)

Senator Fulbright, referring to the press backgrounder on Okinawa, asked why so much significance was given paragraph 3 of the communique, which related the peace and security of Japan to the security of the Far East. Pursuing the same theme, Senator Symington reverted to the Philippine hearings, and said "now we do not know where our money went for the incompetents" sent to Vietnam; he suggested that perhaps we had agreed to give Okinawa back to Japan as a price for Japanese support of US policy. Ambassador

Johnson explained the evolution of Japanese policy and

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opinion over the years toward a fuller recognition of the importance to Japan of US activities on behalf of regional security. He acknowledged that in a sense recognition of a regional security interest was a price for the reversion of Okinawa, i.e., we needed such awareness to be able to accommodate reversion without detriment to collective security.

Senator Fulbright asked a number of questions about Japan's criticism of our policy in Vietnam and attempted to show that Japanese support had been purchased in the form of US spending in Japan related to the war. Ambassador Johnson pointed to Prime Minister Sato's 1967 speech in the US, in which he indicated considerable support for our Vietnam policy and noted that the opposition did not attack Sato upon his return to Japan. Ambassador Johnson also pointed out that the \$200 million or so that Japan gets out of the Vietnam war is of relatively little importance to the economy and of much less importance than our expenditures during the Korean war.

Senator Fulbright digressed to note that he was not at all sure that we understood the facts in the Far East.

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For example, we misunderstood the Vietnamese when we thought that Walt Rostow and General Taylor were correct in advocating surgical bombing. He pointed out that the Philippines would not have sent anyone to Vietnam if they had not received a lot of money in return.

In another aside, Senator Symington suggested that our bases all over the world were subject to minor shifts in governments and the time might come when the Japanese would want us out of Okinawa. He mentioned that he was out of the country when the appropriation for Diego Garcia had been rejected by the Senate; he was confident the Senate would reverse its position and the "Navy would get its base," which would be useful if we had to leave other places.

In response to questions about prior consultation, Ambassador Johnson said that it was the judgment of this administration that reversion would not affect our ability to carry out our commitments, and that Japan had clearly indicated it would not necessarily say "no" to a request under the prior-consultation formula. Senator Symington said that as long as it was not clear they would say "yes," it presented problems for war-planners.

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Senators Symington and Fulbright challenged the official US position not to make public B-52 operations from Okinawa, the latter drawing a parallel to our arguments in regard to air operations in Laos. Ambassador Johnson acknowledged that a case could be made for publicly affirming B-52 operations, but that we had gone along with the Japanese Foreign Office's belief that it would not be helpful, formally and officially to do so. There was no intention to keep information from the American people. Senator Symington, in this context, referred to the President's November 3 speech to the effect that the people should know what is going on as long as it did not affect security. He said it was his personal inclination to have the accomplishments of air power known and felt we tended always to defer to the concern of host governments.

Senator Fulbright pursued the intentions of the administration in regard to submitting the agreement on Okinawa to the Senate, and asked for a memorandum expressing the Department of State's position. Ambassador Johnson said Congress would certainly be consulted fully and its views sought on the question of "necessary legislative support." The decision, which would have to be made by the

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President, would not be required until the agreement was completed probably some time next year. Senator

Fulbright said that it seemed to him the question was to decide on the importance of the issue, and if it seemed important enough, it should take the form of a treaty.

Counsel, noting the importance attached to Prime Minister Sato's Press Club speech, asked whether a public statement as well as a treaty could constitute a commitment; Ambassador Johnson acknowledged that it could. Ambassador Johnson also agreed with Senator Symington that if the Sato government fell, a new government would not necessarily be bound by Sato's statements. Ambassador Johnson added, however, that this was true of any government, and that attitudes were more important than the fine print of treaties. In response to questions from Counsel, Ambassador Johnson went on to explain why, in some ways, Sato's statements had more weight when made in a unilateral speech than in a bilateral communique. If they were placed in a communique, Sato might be open to charges of arm-twisting and bargaining, whereas a statement of policy by a Prime Minister in the Japanese system carries unusual weight.

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Returning to the question of prior consultation, Senator Symington again asked about the Pueblo and EC-121 incidents. Ambassador Johnson said the matter had not come up at the time of Pueblo and General McGehee stated there had been no occasion for prior consultation at the time of the EC-121 incident.

AFTERNOON SESSION

Except for an appearance by Senator Aiken toward the end of the day, Senator Symington was the only member of the Subcommittee present during the afternoon.

Counsel asked whether the Johnson-Sato Joint Communique of 1965 was consistent with the language of the Security Treaty in its reaffirmation of the US intention to defend Japan against an armed attack from outside. Ambassador Johnson said it was consistent.

In the course of a number of questions about past understandings on prior consultation, Counsel asked whether there were any rules about the size of units the US could deploy without consulting Japan; Ambassador Johnson and Mr. George said that there was no agreement, but that Japanese statements in the Diet indicated that they had in

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mind units the size of a ground division, its air force equivalent, and a navy task force. In regard to understandings about the use of forces for Korea, Ambassador Johnson said that he would confine himself to the statements in the 1969 Joint Communique and Prime Minister Sato's speech discussed during the morning session.

Asked about the different formulations in the Communique about the importance of Taiwan and Korea respectively for Japan's security, Ambassador Johnson replied that there was a gradation of interest, with historical precedent for Korea being regarded by Japan as more vital to its defense.

In regard to the reference in the Communique to a new era in US-Japan relations, Ambassador Johnson said that we have moved gradually from a victor-vanquished relationship in 1945 toward a relationship of mutual respect, and that the reversion of Okinawa would mark the termination of the postwar period.

Senator Symington explored what he regarded as the inevitability of Japan and mainland China coming closer together, but Ambassador Johnson pointed out that China did not provide the kind of market Japan needed, inasmuch as its GNP was less than half that of Japan and per capita income

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was only about \$100. Moreover, China lacked raw materials desired by Japan. Senator Symington asked whether Japan regarded China as a threat to Laos and Thailand the way we did. Ambassador Johnson said Japan saw its major Asian interest as being in Southeast Asia and noted the concern expressed in Japan at the time of President Johnson's March 31, 1968 speech by both supporters and critics of US policy, who feared a US withdrawal from mainland Southeast Asia. Ambassador Johnson explained that Japanese criticism of US policy was based primarily on self-centered concern about getting drawn into war. This did not mean the Japanese wanted the US to lose.

Further pursuing the question of prior consultation, Counsel asked about visits of naval vessels and was told it did not apply and that no questions had been raised about visits of aircraft carriers. Asked whether the freedom to bring carriers in was related to Japanese Government statements that there were no nuclear weapons aboard, Ambassador Johnson replied he did not want to say why, but the freedom to enter Japanese ports existed.

There was considerable discussion about the reason why Japan had not signed the NPT. Ambassador Johnson noted

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he could only speculate, but that in addition to concern about industrial espionage the Japanese were probably reluctant to close options. Senator Symington returned to the subject subsequently, asking whether it would not be a good hedge against possible renewed collaboration between China and the USSR to have a nuclear partner in the Pacific. Ambassador Johnson pointed to the spur this might provide to further proliferation and said we could not necessarily assume a nuclear Japan would always act in our interest.

Ambassador Johnson said he entirely agreed with the remark attributed by Counsel to Ambassador Reischauer that our Japanese relationship was the single most important security relationship the US had west of Hawaii. Senator Symington interpolated that the friendship and goodwill of Japan was the most important asset we could have for security in the Far East. He added that many of his questions were asked in the role of devil's advocate in order to obtain as much information as possible; Senator Vandenberg had said that if he was to be involved in a crash landing, he wanted to be present at the take-off.

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Senator Symington explored the relative defense contributions of the US and Japan, emphasizing the financial plight of the US.. He asked a number of questions to verify statements to the effect that Japan was able to take care of its own air and sea defense as far as China was concerned. Ambassador Johnson and General McGehee responded with details about the Chinese air threat.

Counsel cited an article by Morton Halperin to the effect no US forces were maintained for the defense of Japan and any major improvements in Japanese forces would have to be based on the defense of other countries. Allowing for qualitative improvements, Ambassador Johnson indicated this was generally a fair statement. Counsel cited a number of statements by Ambassador Johnson at meetings of the Security Subcommittee to the effect that our forces and bases in Japan and Asia had little to do with the defense of the US. Ambassador Johnson pointed out that what we did in Asia contributed indirectly to the defense of the US. but more directly assisted Asian countries. He had made his remarks at these informal meetings in a context intended to encourage a broader Japanese perspective of regional security.

Summing up a speculative exchange about Japan's future

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role in Asia, Ambassador Johnson said that on the one hand we want Japan to do more while on the other hand we feel uncertain about the implications of a bigger role. He doubted whether the Japanese themselves knew what they wished to accomplish, but it was certain that they would in fact be more active. The best the US could do in its national interest was try to maintain as close a relationship as possible. When Counsel turned the discussion to a possible military assistance role for Japan, General McGehee stated that they have the capability and Ambassador Johnson added that one of his thoughts in establishing the Security Subcommittee was to see if we could not get Japan to move toward military assistance for Korea, at least on the non-lethal side.

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